A

CHALLENGE

TO THE

Diſſenters:

OR,

Several Propoſitions,

Relating to the Neceſſity of

Conſtant Communion

With the Eſtabliſh'd

CHURCH of ENGLAND:

Wherein the *Objections* of the *Diſſenters* (Eſpecially the *Presbyterians* and *Independents*) are Obviated and Defeated.

TOGETHER WITH

A Serious Expoſtulation with them; And, *A Juſt Appeal to their Conſciences.*

By EDWARD GATCHELL.

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To the READER.

THE Design of these few Pages, is, not to entertain thee with *new Idea's* or *airy Speculations*, but with OLD SUBSTANTIAL TRUTHS; and to contract the *Controversy* between the Church of *England* and the *Dissenters*, into so narrow a Compass, that the Poor, the Busy, and the Weakest Sons of the Church, may, at a *small Expence* of Money and Time, be furnish'd with that ARMOUR of PROOF, whereby they may be able to *defend* themselves, and *defeat* their most daring and subtil *Antagonists*. For which end, I have reduc'd it to certain Propositions, which are either *Self-evident*; or, being joyn'd with others, are so *clear* and *convincing*, that 'tis impossible for an *impartial* and *unprejudic'd* Mind to resist the sweet Violence of their *United Rays*; and are so exactly link'd together, that a *Stoick* might as easily break the *fatal Series* of Causes, as a truly conscientious and reasoning Christian this *Chain* of *Ecclesiastick Thoughts:* Which obliges us to perform all those Duties which our *Relation* and *Circumstances* (as Members of a *Christian Society* under an *English Government*) exact from us: To contribute what we can in *Religion* (as every thing in *Nature* does) to the *Harmony* of the *Sphere* wherein Heaven has plac'd us: Which

conſiſts in mutual Offices and Endearments, and a *juſt Uniformity* in *Worſhip* and *Obedience*: Which obliges us to ſecure the *Tranquility* of the State, by preſerving the *Unity* (the Strength and Beauty) of the Church: Which is the *firmeſt Support* of Monarchy, and the *ſtrongeſt Bulwark* againſt *Popery*, *Socinianiſm*, *Atheiſm*, and *Immorality*; and, in a Word, the Glory and Security of *Great-Britain*. May theſe Propoſitions be a Means, either of convincing thee of thine *Error*, or confirming thee in the *Truth*; for which Purpoſe, I have purſu'd the natural, eaſy, and familiar Method of a *ſincere Lover* of it; not the ſcholaſtick Meaſures of a *wrangling Pedant*. May theſe fix the *fluctuating Occaſional Conformiſt*, and convert the *Mercenary Hypocrite*, a *Votary* of *Mammon*, into a *true Diſciple* of the *Self-denying Jeſus*. May theſe, finally, inflame all *careleſs* and *lukewarm Members*, with a *vigilant* and *generous Zeal* for the *Doctrine* and *Worſhip*, *Honour* and *Intereſt*, of the *Beſt* of *Churches*. Which is the hearty Prayer of

E. G.

☞ ONE, who was ſo unhappy as to be *Educated* by the *Diſſenters*, and ſince, Infected with the ſpreading Principles of *Socinianiſm*; which, with little Reluctancy, He entertain'd; by the Impreſſion whereof, he *gradually*

dually ſunk into the very *Dregs* of *Deiſm*; which had a ſtrong and venomous *Influence* on the *Conduct* of his *Life*. And indeed, this is an *eaſy Deſcent*; every *Remove* from the Church of *England*, being (as ſad and daily Experience ſhews us) a *declining Step* towards *Hereſy*; and That, towards a *total Extirpation* of *Reveal'd Religion*: Which is the *Grand Deſign* (under various Colours) of a Potent and Politick *Republican Party* of this divided and degenerate Kingdom: Whoſe *Unhallowed* and *Antimonarchical Meaſures*, the ſeveral *Sects* of *Schiſmaticks* (whoſe *ſeditious Seperation* they Patronize) do either *wilfully* or *blindly* purſue.

One, who has for ſome time been an *Unworthy Member* of the moſt Orthodox and ſoundeſt, beſt govern'd and diſciplin'd *Body* of *Chriſtians* in the World: Who frankly confeſſes, That, by the *Sallies* of wild extravagant Fancy, and an *irregular* Converſation, he has *tarniſh'd* the *Reputation* and *leſſen'd* the *Credit* of this *Divine Society*; the *Ignorant* and *Malicious* being apt to charge the *whole Body* with the Failures of *particular Members*. Wherefore, reflecting, with a juſt Regret and Sorrow, on his paſt Errors in *Principle* and *Practice*; he is reſolv'd, by the Grace of God, to endeavour a *Retrieval*; by ſubjecting his *Reaſon* for the future, to the bright Authentick *Revelations* of the *Infallible Spirit*, and his *Fancy* and *Paſſions* to the *Empire*

and

and *Guidance* of both. And thinks himſelf indiſpenſably oblig'd, by the Laws of *Nature* and *Chriſtianity*, to embrace all Opportunities of exerting the *ſmall Talent* Heaven has indulg'd him, in vindicating the *Honour*, and advancing the *Intereſt*, of his *Offended Mother*; whoſe Pardon, with the profoundeſt Humility, he implores; and ſolemnly declares, That, by the concurrent Influence of the Divine Spirit, he will employ his future Minutes in making all *poſſible Amends* for his *former Deviations* from the *Excellent Rules* ſhe has preſcrib'd us. And being mov'd with a deep Concern and Chriſtian Zeal, for the Security and Peace of his *dear native Country*, as well as the *Reform'd Religion* in it, has, without any *mercenary Regard*, publiſh'd theſe Propoſitions; in order to convince thoſe that are ſo *unhappily educated* and *miſled*, of the *Malignity* and *fatal Tendency* of ſuch *Schiſmatick* and *Heretical Principles*; which threaten the *Diſſolution* both of *Church* and *State*. And he earneſtly beſeeches them to read theſe Pages, without any *Reſpect* to the *Author*; leaſt *Prejudice* againſt his Perſon ſhoulde *lude* the *Force*, and *defeat* the *Deſign*, of the *Undertaking*. And indeed, none but Men of *ſhallow Capacities*, will reject a *wholeſome Remedy*, becauſe a *ſick* Phyſician preſcrib'd it. *Vale.*

Several

Several Propoſitions,

Relating to the

Neceſſity of Conſtant Communion

With the Eſtabliſh'd

CHURCH of ENGLAND.

WHEREIN,

The *Objections* of the *Diſſenters* (eſpecially the *Presbyterians* and *Independents*) are obviated and defeated.

I. THE Chriſtian Church is a BODY or SOCIETY of Men, ſeperated by Jeſus Chriſt (their HEAD) from the *Reſt* of the World; and united to the *Sacred Trinity*, and to *Themſelves*, by *One Divine Evangelical Covenant*.

II. That the Church being founded on *One Covenant*, tho' divided for Man's Conveniency into *ſeveral* Congregational Parts, is but *One* all Chriſtendom over.

III. That *to be in Communion* with it, is *to be a Member* of it: *Praying*, *Hearing*, and *Receiving the Sacraments together*, not being in a ſtrict Senſe *Communion*, but an *Exerciſe* of it. And,

IV. Consequently; That none but *Members* are capable of performing *Acts* of *Communion*.

V. That by *Baptism* we are admitted into this *Covenant*, and made *Visible Members* of the *Universal Church*.

VI. By being Members, we are entitled to all the *Priviledges*, and oblig'd to perform all the *Offices* of Church-Society, *viz.* to obey the Church's Authority, joyn Prayers, *&c.*

VII. That all *true Churches* are Members of each other, tho' each has a *peculiar* Jurisdiction; and every Act of Communion an Act of Communion with the *Whole Catholick Church*, tho' perform'd in a *particular* Congregation.

VIII. That distinct Congregations of *Foreigners* and the Church within whose Jurisdiction they live, and whose Communion they own, are Members of *each other*, tho' they observe the Rules and Customs of the Churches to which they originally belong. But,

IX. 'Tis impossible for *Seperate Assemblies* held in the same Kingdom, under distinct Kinds of Government and different Governours, to be Members of each other; who condemn the Constitution and Forms of Worship, renounce the Communion and endeavour the Subversion of each other; and are so far from being *One Church*, as several sorts of Government in the same Nation, with distinct Governours, Subjects, and Laws, at perpetual Enmity and War with each other, are from being *One Kingdom*.

X. That 'tis likewise impossible for a Man to be in Communion with, or (which is the same thing) to be a Member of two such *Seperate* and *Opposite* Societies, without being as contrary to *Himself*, as those Churches are to *each other*.

XI. That two Churches not being Members of each other, cannot partake in the *same Covenant* (which is the

the *Divine Charter* whereon the Church is founded) but the *Divider* forfeits his Intereſt in it.

XII. That all the *Bleſſings* of the Covenant are convey'd to us by *Actual* Communion with the Church.

XIII. That the Church being divided into ſeveral Parts, and every particular Church having its Limits, as every Member of the Body its proper Place, and every Baptiz'd Perſon a *viſible* and *fixt* Member of the Church, and every Member *conſtantly* oblig'd to perform Acts of *viſible* Communion, whereby the Bleſſings of the Covenant are convey'd; 'tis the Indiſpenſable Duty and true Intereſt of every Chriſtian *actually* and *conſtantly* to communicate with the Eſtabliſh'd Church wherein he lives, provided, it be ſo *Orthodox* and *Sound*, that he may *Lawfully* live in Communion with it.

XIV. That is an Orthodox and Sound Part of the *Catholick Church*, which requires Nothing *Sinful*, as a Condition of its Communion.

XV. That if any thing leſs than *ſinful Terms* of Communion might juſtify our *Seperation* from the Eſtabliſh'd Church, *Diviſions* wou'd be *Infinite*, and Men might *New-Model* Churches as often as their *Fancies* alter.

XVI. That the *Withdrawing* our ſelves from Ordinary Communion with ſuch a Church wherein we live, into *Seperate Societies*, is **Schiſm** from the Univerſal Church, the Communion of the Church being but *One*.

XVII. That *Schiſm* (which the Apoſtles and all the ancient Chriſtians have repreſented in the *blackeſt Colours*) is a **Sin** of ſo *Heinous a Nature*, that 'tis as *Fatal* to the Souls of Men as *Adultery* or *Murther*.

XVIII. That the Eſtabliſh'd Church of *England* is ſuch an *Orthodox* and *Sound Part* of the Catholick Church, has been acknowledg'd by the moſt Eminent and Sober *Non-Conformiſts*; whereof I cou'd give a Volume of Teſtimonies, and is confirm'd by moſt *Diſſenters Occaſional Communion* with it.

XIX. That a *Perſwaſion*, that Communion with the Church of *England* is *Unlawful*, when indeed 'tis not ſo, will no more juſtify a *Seperation* from it, than St. *Paul*'s *erroneous Conſcience* his violent Perſecution of the Chriſtians; upon which account he ſtyles himſelf the *Greateſt of Sinners*.

XX. That the *Moral* Goodneſs or Evil of Actions is not to be meaſur'd by Mens *Opinions* concerning 'em, but by the Natural and Reveal'd Law of God, which is the *Rule of Conſcience*.

XXI. That no Man can plead *Conſcience* for his *Seperation* from the Church of *England*, unleſs he be perſwaded, That he cannot joyn in Communion with it, without tranſgreſſing the Law of God in ſo doing.

XXII. That whatſoever is expreſly *commanded*, or *forbidden*, by the Natural or Reveal'd Law of God, or by direct Inference or Parity of Reaſon, is a *Duty* or a *Sin*; and *That* which is neither ſo *commanded*, or *forbidden*, is *Indifferent*; and we may do it, or omit it, with a *ſafe Conſcience*.

XXIII. 'Tis a Dictate of the Law of Nature to Obey Governours in every thing that is *Juſt* and *Honeſt*; without which, every State, City and Family, wou'd quickly disband, and crumble into Confuſion: And God has expreſly commanded us in Scripture to *Obey them that have the Rule over us, and to be ſubject to the higher Powers*; *not only for Wrath, but alſo for Conſcience ſake*, Rom. 13. 5.

XXIV. That in a *ſecondary Senſe*, Human Laws are a *part* of the *Rule* of *Conſcience*, by Vertue of, and in Subordination to, the Laws of God; we being bound in Conſcience to yield Obedience to the Laws of Men, that are not inconſiſtent with the Laws of God; becauſe therein we Obey his expreſs Command: So that, thô the *Matter* of the Command be *Indifferent*, yet *Obedience* to it is *abſolutely neceſſary*.

XXV. That

XXV. That *All Men* being bound to *Obey* the Laws of Men, that are not repugnant to the Laws of God, they are conſequently oblig'd ſo to do in *Eccleſiaſtick Affairs*; unleſs it can be evinc'd (which can never be done) That God has forbidden Men to enact Laws relating to *Religious Matters*.

XXVI. That a Divine Law, cloath'd with *Circumſtances* of Human Appointment, creates a much ſtronger Obligation than a Law of Man, that enjoyns a Thing perfectly *Indifferent*: In that, we obeying becauſe 'tis God's *own Law*; in this, obeying Men, becauſe God has oblig'd us *in general* to obey our Superiours.

XXVII. That every Man is oblig'd by the *Law* of *Nature* to contribute what he can to the Tranquility of the Community whereof he is a Member; and conſequently to *conform* to the Orders and Cuſtoms of the Eſtabliſh'd Church, as far as he *lawfully* may; the Intereſts of Church and State being ſo *interwoven* in our *Britiſh Conſtitution*, that *Schiſm* in the *One* does neceſſarily imbroil the *Other*.

XXVIII. That every Chriſtian is indiſpenſably bound by the Laws of Jeſus Chriſt, and the Nature of his Religion, to preſerve, *as much as in him lies*, the *Unity* of the Church; which conſiſts not only in profeſſing the *ſame Faith*, but joyning together in the Solemnities of the *ſame Worſhip*. And thô Human Laws preſcribe particular Circumſtances and Forms of Worſhip; yet he that Violates the *Unity* of the *National* Church, does really tranſgreſs the Laws of Nature and of Chriſt, as well as of Man; Nay, is guilty of *Schiſm*, thô by reaſon of an *Indulgence*, granted to *ſcrupulous Conſciences*, he is not accountable to Man for his *Seperation* from the Eſtabliſh'd Church.

XXIX. That 'tis very apparent, that the *Dissenters* never did, *as much as in them lay*, towards the *Unity* of the Church, and the *Peace* of the Kingdom; *i. e.* They never contributed to the Welfare and Tranquility of the State, by the *highest Degree* of Conformity to the Establish'd Church; which their own Consciences might *safely dispense withal*; whose *Divisions* in Externals do naturally tend to dissolve the *Unity* of Charity and Affection; which must necessarily terminate in Confusion, Tumult and Ruin.

XXX. That it is almost impossible to imagine, that any Man professing Christianity should be truly *tender* and *scrupulous* in Things of an *indifferent Nature*, and *confident* and *careless* in the Violation of a Duty *necessary* and *essential* to the Life and Being of Christianity, and a Christian Church and Kingdom.

XXXI. That a Refusal to *comply* with Things *indifferent*, because *Enjoyn'd by Lawful Authority*, is an Argument of an *Obstinate* and *Rebellious* Spirit, and not of a *Tender* and *Scrupulous Conscience*.

XXXII. That our Saviour himself did use *Indifferent Things*, that were not prescrib'd in Divine Worship,: Thus he joyn'd in the *Synagogal Worship*, tho the Manner of it was not so much as hinted at; and us'd the Cup of Charity in the Passover; and vouchsafed to be present at the Feast of Dedication; which were *Human Institutions:* Nay, comply'd with the *Jews* in the very Posture of the Passover, which they chang'd to *sitting*, tho God had prescrib'd *standing*.

XXXIII. The *Dissenters*, who condemn the *Use* of such Things as *are not commanded by God*, do in their Practice *confute* their *own* Opinion: Seeing they are no where commanded to Sprinkle the Children that are Baptiz'd, to receive the Lord's Supper *sitting*, to touch or kiss the Book in *swearing*, or to enter into a *Particular Church-Covenant*, *&c.*

XXXIV. That

34. That 'tis impoſſible to frame an *Idea* of a Church without certain *Rites* and *Ceremonies* in it.

35. That for theſe, there is no particular and *definitive Rule* in Scripture; which is evident from thoſe *General Rules* relating to this Matter, *Let all things be done to Edification*; and, *Let all things be done decently, and in order*, 1 Cor. 14. 26. 40. Which wou'd be altogether needleſs, if *all Particulars* were fix'd and determin'd accordingly.

36. That as no Churches are without their Rites and Ceremonies, ſo every Church aſſumes an Authority to fix and determine theſe; and indeed, not only thoſe of the *Ausburgh Confeſſion*, but *Calvin* and his Followers, nay *Andrew Melvil* himſelf in his *Platform of Presbytery* for the Church of *Scotland*, expreſly declares, That it belongs to the Church to determine all Matters relating to *Decency* and *Order* in the Circumſtantials of Divine Worſhip.

37. That the Ceremonies of our Church are neither *Indecent* nor *Burthenſome* for their Number, cannot be deny'd; nor *Idolatrous* or *Superſtitious*; (which are the Three Things for which Rites and Ceremonies can be juſtly condemn'd); our Church entertaing *no Opinion* that has the leaſt Tincture of *Idolatry* or *Superſtition*; but hath many Doctrines, nay, All neceſſary, to impugn and overthrow both: And 'tis impoſſible to *form* a Notion of Idolatry or Superſtition in *Practice*, without an Idolatrous or Superſtitious *Opinion* to Found it upon.

38. That a Man may *Conſcientiouſly* do what God has not commanded, out of *Obedience* to Governours, for *External Order* and *Decency*, without a *ſuperſtitious Thought* of flattering God with it, or placing any *Religion* in it: But 'tis impoſſible for a Man Conſcientiouſly to Abſtain from what God has not Forbidden, and is by Lawful Authority Enjoyn'd, but he muſt think to *pleaſe God* by ſuch a Refuſal; in which *Fond Conceit*,

Conceit, of pleasing and humouring God by Things of an *Indifferent Nature*, consists the *True Spirit* of Superstition.

39. That our Church declares, That it builds the Injunction and Use of its few Ceremonies on no other Foundation than the General Rules of St. *Paul*, that they tend to Decency, Order, and Edification.

40. That our Governours (to whom surely we may rationally allow as much Light, Prudence, and Spiritual Assistance, as to a few *fanciful* and *discontented* Subjects) are the *fittest Judges* of the Tendency of Circumstantials to Decency, Order, and Edification.

41. That it is most Just and Reasonable, that we shou'd pay that Deference to the Judgment of our Superiours (whose Business it is to consult and command for the best), as to be guided by them in *Doubtful Cases*; as we expect our Children and Servants shou'd be by us; without which Submission, the Publick Happiness can't possibly be secur'd, nor Eternal Confusions prevented; there being no Indifferent Thing, but some Person or other may *doubt* of the *Lawfulness* of it.

42. That thô the Apostle says, *Rom.* 14. 23. *He that doubteth is damn'd* (*i. e.* condemn'd by his own Conscience) *if he eat, because he eateth not of Faith*; for *whatsoever is not of Faith, is Sin*: Yet it does not follow, that a Man *sins* in Obeying Authority, where he *doubts* of the Lawfulness of the Command; there being a vast *Disparity* in the Cases; since the Man St. *Paul* speaks of was *at liberty* to forbear eating, and sinned in chusing to run a *needless Hazard* of transgressing the Divine Laws: But when a Lawful Governour commands, a Man ceases to be at *Liberty*. In the former Case, a Man might forbear without any Danger; but in the latter, there is *greater Hazard* in *forbearing*, than in *acting*; and consequently oblig'd to act in the *latter Case*, thô it might be a *Sin* to act in the *former*.

former. * But if the Authority of Superiours alone ſhou'd not have Weight enough to turn the Ballance, yet the Important Conſiderations, which you'll find in the 47th Propoſition, are ſufficient to *Over-Rule* the *Doubt*, and to prevail with every Good and Wiſe Man, to Conform to the Orders of our Church.

43. That the wiſeſt *Diſſenters* themſelves will not deny, but that a *Church-Man* may be a good Chriſtian and be ſav'd, who follows the Conduct of his Superiours in *doubtful Caſes*, tho' he may not be capable of defending the Ceremonies of our Church: But 'tis a Truth univerſally acknowledg'd, That he that ſeparates upon the Account of 'em, is bound at the *Peril* of his *own Salvation*, to embrace all Opportunities, and uſe his *beſt Endeavours*, to inform and ſatisfy himſelf about 'em.

44. That common Experience tells us, That the Generality of thoſe that ſeparate from our Church, never examin'd and weigh'd the Conſtitution of our Church, which they forſake, or of that, to which they betake themſelves: And tho' they ſeparate, upon a pretended Diſlike of our Rites, yet never conſider'd the Nature of *Things Indifferent*, or of *Chriſtian Liberty*, or of the *Power* of every particular Church in eſtabliſhing the *Circumſtantials* of Divine Worſhip; Nay, that do no more underſtand either, at this Day, than I do the Laws and Intereſts of *China* and *Japan*; and which

* Here I argue with the *Diſſenters* on their own Principles, ſuppoſing that St. *Paul* ſpeaks of a Doubting Perſon; whereas he ſpeaks here of One that is perſwaded; which is evident from the 14th Verſe of this Chapter, *But to him that eſteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean.* As for the Word διακρίνομενος, it does as properly ſignify, *he that maketh a Difference*, as, *he that Doubteth*; and ſo indeed it ought to have been tranſlated, as we have it in the Margin of our Bibles.

which is worſe, never *endeavour* it; but wilfully reſiſt and ſhun all Means and Attempts of their Information, and are provok'd and exaſperated by our zealous Endeavours to convince 'em of their Error, tho' manag'd with the Spirit of *Meekneſs* and *Integrity*: Nay, it does not appear, That they much conſult their *own Teachers* in this Affair; the moſt eminent whereof have declar'd, That a Lay Perſon may lawfully join with us in all things; and are ready, *upon Occaſion*, to conform in all the Inſtances of *Lay-Communion*.

45. That in *Doubtful Caſes*, (the Nature of Things being duly conſider'd and examin'd by us) *That ſide* is to be *choſen*, which appears moſt *ſafe* and *reaſonable*; that is, That which is freeſt from the greateſt Dangers and Inconveniencies, and *beſt* ſerves all the ſpiritual and temporal Intereſts, that a wiſe and good Man can propoſe.

46. That ſince the Uſages of our Church, which the Diſſenters ſcruple, are not *directly* forbidden by God, and if they are prohibited by *Inferences* drawn from expreſs Commands; theſe are ſo *obſcure*, that tho' they have been ſo many hundred Years in the Chriſtian Church, they were never condemn'd as *unlawful* 'till of late; and even now, theſe *Conſequences* are not diſcern'd by our Superiors; no, not by the *wiſeſt* and *beſt* Divines of all Perſwaſions in the World; who acknowledge our Injunctions to be *Innocent* at leaſt, if not *Apoſtolical*: So that if they are all miſtaken, it can be but a *Sin* of *Ignorance* at moſt, in thoſe of *meaner Capacities*, where ſo many of the *beſt Guides* are miſtaken.

47. That if our Governours ſhould be *in the right*, and our Communion *lawful*; then the Diſſenters are guilty of a *Sin* of the moſt *flagrant Nature*, in violating the Laws of *Church-Unity*, which are as plain and obvious

vious as any in the Sacred Pages; and that, *in ſuch Inſtances*, where the whole Catholick Church of old, and the greateſt and beſt part of the preſent Church are of a different Perſuaſion from 'em; who forſake the Communion of ſuch a Sound and Orthodox Church of Jeſus Chriſt, and ſet up a *diſtinct Altar* in oppoſition to it; whereby they contemn the Publick Worſhip of Almighty God, and paſs a ſevere Sentence upon all the true Sons of the Church; whoſe Doctrine and Worſhip have been ſeal'd with the *Blood* of ſo many Martyrs; and deprive themſelves of the ordinary Means of Salvation, diſpens'd by thoſe that are *duly authorized* and *commiſſion'd* for that Purpoſe; whereby they keep up thoſe Diſcords and Animoſities among us, which have given birth to all thoſe Calamities which this unhappy Nation has of late groan'd under, and ſeem to threaten more; which enervate our Conſtitution, and expoſe us as a Prey to a Common Enemy; which have hinder'd the Converſion of many *Roman Catholicks* to the Pure Worſhip of God, as the Inteſtine Broils and Quarrels among Chriſtians in general have *that* of *Turks*, *Jews* and *Heathens*, to Chriſtianity; which have harden'd the Worſt of *Sects* in their *Opinions*, and open'd one Door to *Popery*, and another to *Sceptiſm*, *Atheiſm*, and *Immorality*; whereby they Affront their Governours, which is far worſe than Offending a Weak Brother; give Scandal to all Peaceable Perſons, and offer a Fair Pretence to Men of a *Factious* and *Turbulent* Temper, to combine againſt the Beſt of Governments; and conſequently, take the moſt effectual Courſe to ruin the *Reform'd Religion* in this Kingdom.

48. That ſeeing no Doubt about the Lawfulneſs of our Communion, nor the *higheſt Probability* of the Doubt, can poſſibly Ballance againſt ſuch a Sin, and ſuch Conſequences; much leſs can Perſonal Corrupti-

ons, or the empty Pretence of better Edification do it.

49. That this *Exception* and *Pretence* will ſerve the *Turn* to juſtify a Seperation not only from Ours, but any Church in Chriſtendom; there being no viſible Church without *corrupt Members:* And the Pretence of *better Edification* will never be admitted to be of any Weight or Force, 'till it be made appear, That 'tis no matter whether a Man be of the Eſtabliſh'd Church, or *Presbyterian*, or *Independent*, or *Anabaptiſt*, or *Antinomian*, or *Socinian*, or *Quaker*; each whereof laying Claim to this Pretence, with as much Heat as any of the reſt; which will continue as long as the Abilities of the Miniſters, and the Diſpoſitions of People, are *Different* and *Various:* And ſad Experience tells us, That the Pretences of Seeking for a *Purer Church* (either in reſpect of its Members or Ordinances, or both) and a more *Ediſying Miniſtry*, have carried many through a Succeſſion or Deſcent of *Sects*, 'till at laſt they are left in the *Dregs* and *Lees* of *All Sects*, or center in the Communion of the *Romiſh Church*, or *Atheiſtically* ſhake Hands with every thing that has the Face or Shadow of Religion among us.

50. That our Church does as *ſeverely* condemn Vicious and Immoral Practices, as any Church in the World; and would more ſeverely chaſtize Offenders, if our *Cauſeleſs Diviſions* had not check'd and hinder'd the Diſcharge of our Diſcipline upon Them: And whoever Reads the *Rubrick* and *Canons* of our Church, relating to the Admiſſion of Perſons to, or Rejection from the Sacrament, muſt, if he be not obſtinately Prejudic'd, confeſs, That our Church is ſo far from approving Vice and Impiety in its Members, That it has taken all the Care, that can reaſonably be deſir'd, to purge our Communion of All Things that may give juſt Occaſion of Offence to Any. 51. That

51. That the Sins of *corrupt* and *ſcandalous* Members, cannot poſſibly Poiſon or Defile thoſe Perſons that are not *Acceſſary* to 'em; no more than *Judas* cou'd Infect our Saviour and his Apoſtles at the Paſſover: The Good and the Bad communicating not in Sin, but in a common Duty.

52. That our Saviour did, by his *Example* and *Precept*, diſcountenance and forbid a *Seperation* from the *Jewiſh Church*, upon this Account; who did not ſeperate from it, thô the *Scribes* and *Phariſees* (who then ſat at the Helm in Eccleſiaſtick Matters) were *Blind Guides* and *Hypocrites*; who *perverted the Law, corrupted the Worſhip of God, devoured Widows* Houſes, *&c. Mat.* 15. *And yet*, ſays he, *they ſit in* Moſes's *Seat: All therefore whatſoever they bid you obſerve, that obſerve and do*, Mat. 23. 2, 3.

53. That 'tis the Apoſtles *Expreſs Command* to hold Communion with the Church of *Corinth*, notwithſtanding the many *Great Immoralities* that were among the *Members* of it: (*1 Cor.* 33. & 51. & 11. 18.) As *Contenſion, Strife, Envying, Fornication, and Inceſt, eating* at the Idols Table, and coming not ſo *ſoberly* as became them to the *Table* of the Lord.

54. That as to Edification, we have all things *Requiſite* in our Conſtitution, to the *building us up in our Moſt Holy Faith*; and our Clergy do, with a becoming Vehemence, preſs All thoſe Duties upon their Auditors, which are neceſſary to their Happineſs in this and the other World.

55. That we've juſt Reaſon to ſuſpect, That the Edification that cannot be Promoted in ſuch a Communion, is not deriv'd from the *Spirit* and *Goſpel* of Chriſt; but depends upon Perſonal Abilities, Acquir'd Forms, or the Inventions and Paſſions of Men.

56. That nothing is more common, than for the *Opinions* of *Parties*, a particular Set of Words, Hy-

pochondriack Whimsies, Nice Notions, and Luscious Fancies, to pass for *Gospel Essential Truths:* And Sudden Heats, a Loud Voice, an Impetuous Flow of Words, and a Melting Tone, instead of Sound and Solid Reasoning, to pass for Means of *Better Edification*, among the Thoughtless, Inconstant, and Giddy Multitude; who for want of Ballast, are easily toss'd about with every Wind of Doctrine.

57. That if we consider *Edification*, or building up, as apply'd to the *Whole Church*, as the *House* or *Temple* of God, 'tis a Contradiction in Terms to say, That the Temple of God is built up by dividing and seperating the Parts of it from each other; and if we consider it as apply'd to *Particular Christians*, and importing their Growth in Grace, and Improvement in Vertue, in the *Unity* of the Church, under the *Influence* of the Divine Spirit; which in a *peculiar manner* resides in this Temple, shedding abroad its Graces in it, and animates this Body of Christ; Surely then, to *seperate* from the *Common Building*, and to *cut off* our selves from the *Unity* of the Body of Christ, is no likely way to *Edification.*

58. Lastly, seeing the *Dissenters* seperate from an Orthodox and Sound Part of the Catholick Church, Establish'd by Lawful Authority, upon a pretended Dislike of its Ceremonies, or Things not forbidden by God, which they conscientiously Abstain from, we must necessarily conclude, That the *Dissenters* from the Church of *England* are Guilty of *Schism*, *Disobedience*, and *Superstition*.

A Serious Expoſtulation with the Diſſenters; *and, A Juſt Appeal to their* Conſciences.

AND now I cannot but reaſonably imagine, that by this time you are throughly convinc'd of your *Errour*; unleſs you are *Steel'd* againſt Argument, and *Impregnable* to Demonſtration: Unleſs you are *Blinded* by Paſſion, *Perverted* by Prejudice, or *Corrupted* by Secular Intereſt; which clap a *Falſe Byaſs* on the Underſtanding, and carry it off from *TRUTH*. And indeed, All Thoſe that have Travell'd to Reſtore you to the *Unity* of the Church, find it a more difficult Task to Encounter your *Paſſions* and *Prejudices*, than your *Reaſons*; which, God knows, are like the **Hope of a Hypocrite**, or a Spider's Web, which is miſerably thin and weak. If you are not yet convinc'd, I beſeech you to Read o'er the *Propoſitions* again, with that Application of Mind, the Weight of the Affair deſerves; and with that meek, lowly, and teachable Temper, which becomes every Chriſtian *that is willing to be Inform'd*; which, I am ſenſible, is more than One-half of your Information. Methinks you ſhou'd not cloſe your Eyes, 'till you had ſatisfy'd your ſelves in a Matter of ſuch *Vaſt Importance*, as concerns the *Glory* of God, the *Security* of Religion, the *Peace* of the Community, and your own *Eternal Happineſs*. If your Conſciences are ſo *Tender* and *Scrupulous*, as you pretend they are, you wou'd embrace all Opportunities, and uſe your beſt Endeavours to Inform and Reſolve them; and gladly kiſs the Hand that brings you the Tidings of Peace, and offers you any Light to rectify your Judgments, and diſperſe your Scruples; and at Once reſtore you to the *Boſom* of the Church, and the *Tranquility* of your *Own*. Nay, you wou'd ſeek for *Satisfaction* with the ſame Concern and Diligence, as a Man dangerouſly ill for

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a *Remedy*. And indeed, a Scrupulous Conſcience is as certain a Sign of a *ſickly Temper* of Mind, proceeding from *wrong Idea's* of God and Religion, from Prejudice and Predominant Melancholy; as the Squeamiſhneſs of the Stomach, which Salutary Food offends, is a Symptom of an unſound and diſtemper'd Body. But alas! The Indications are quite different in moſt of you; and create a Juſt Suſpicion, that your Conſcience is Nothing but *Humour* and *Deſign*, and your Scruples mere *Shams* and *Politick Pretences*; who *Wilfully* ſhut your Minds againſt the Brighteſt Evidence, and reject the Means of your Recovery; who *Induſtriouſly ſeek* for Scruples in our *Liturgy*, and *ſtrain* every thing in order to Form an Objection againſt it: Who read all our Diſcourſes on this Subject with a Captious Air and Deſign, and not with that Diſpoſition of Mind, which becomes every Chriſtian, that is truly deſirous to know *what the good and acceptable Will of God is*, in order to conform his Actions to it. But however, ſeeing, Chriſtian, thou pretendeſt to act out of Conſcience, I may juſtly appeal to it, and demand an *Anſwer* to the following *Interrogatories*.

Art thou as Cautious and Circumſpect in the *whole Conduct* of thy Life, and *Tenor* of thy Converſation, as in this *particular Point?* Art thou as Nice and Scrupulous in thy Dealings, and the Eſſential Duties of Religion, particularly *Juſtice* and *Mercy*, as in Things of an Indifferent Nature? Art thou of a modeſt, humble, charitable, and peaceable Temper; and as careful not to Injure thoſe of another Perſwaſion, by Raſh Cenſures and Backbiting Reflections, as thou art not to Offend a weak Brother by a Ceremonial Obſervance? Haſt thou done as much for the *Peace* of the Church, as thou wouldeſt for an *Office* in the State; and Conform'd in All thoſe Inſtances, where thou art ſatisfy'd thou may'ſt do it with a *ſafe*

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Conſcience? If thou art thus *Cautious* and *Compliable*, I ſhou'd gladly careſs thee with all the Tenderneſs imaginable: But alaſs! Where is the Man? I wiſh I had no Reaſon to fear, That I hug a *Phantom*, and embrace a *Shadow*. Good God! That ever there ſhou'd be ſuch a *Monſter* in the World call'd **Conſcience**, which *Superſtitiouſly* ſtrains at a Ceremony, and greedily ſwallows *Schiſm* and *Diſobedience* at once; and lately *Rebellion* and *Murther*. I demand further, Haſt thou any other Reaſons for thy Non-Compliance, than Thoſe, which *Education* ſuggeſts, and *Intereſt* Inſpires; which engag'd thee firſt in the *Seperation*, and provoke thee to maintain it? Is it not to *humour* this or that Man, or *Party*, on whom thou dependeſt for *Trade*, *Cuſtom*, and a *Livelyhood*; who oblige thee to give thy Vote, to ſtrengthen an Intereſt on all Publick Occaſions? Indeed theſe Inducements are ſo *Mercenary* and *Sordid*, that thou dareſt not *Own* 'em above-board: But *be not Deceiv'd*, *God is not Mock'd*; whoſe Eye penetrates the cloſeſt Receſſes of the Breaſt. Or, Is it *Pride* (which is the Mother and Nurſe of moſt Vices) and a *Fond Conceit* of thine own Abilities, or a Spirit of *Obſtinacy*, or rather both, that hinder thy Compliance? Haſt thou continued ſo long in a *Schiſmatick State*, that thou art now aſham'd, or ſcorn'ſt to retract thine Opinion? I demand further, Doſt thou not train up thy Children in a Prophane Contempt of the Publick Worſhip and Service of the Church, which perhaps when they come of Years turn *Ranters* and *Atheiſts*? Is not thy Fancy tickled with the Drolleries and Satyrical Reflections of the *Debauch'd Libellers* of the Age (the *Tools* of *State-Diſſenters*, *Wkiggiſh Socinians*, *Arians* and *Deiſts*) who ridicule the Authority, Miniſtry, and Uſages of the Church of *England*; diverting themſelves with the *Aſhes* of the Bleſſed Martyrs, whereon 'twas Eſtabliſh'd

bliſh'd in this Kingdom; and which is worſe, with the *Precious Blood* of the Son of God, wherewith 'twas purchaſed and ſeal'd. But further, can'ſt thou imagine that thy Teachers are Men of Conſcience and Integrity, who in Print and Converſation declare, That they can ſafely comply in all the Inſtances of Lay-Communion; and yet, ſet up diſtinct Churches in the bowels of an Orthodox and ſound One, lawfully eſtabliſh'd; tearing it in pieces, ſeducing its Members, and endeavouring to beget in them an *Opinion* which they themſelves renounce; in order to carry on the *Intereſt* of a Party, but eſpecially their own *Selfiſh-Deſigns*; building their Fortunes on the *Ruins* of a Chriſtian and Reformed Church. And indeed, I tremble to conſider, how ſtrangely they have debauch'd the Conſciences of many of their *Auditors*, who *proſtitute* the Holy Sacrament (the moſt Venerable Myſtery of our Religion) to Baſe and Siniſter Ends; *viz.* To qualify them for an Office of Power and Profit: "Which, as One obſerves, is ſo *deliberate* a way of "Sinning, even in the moſt Solemn Act of Worſhip, "that one wou'd imagine, none ſhou'd be guilty of "it, but Men of the moſt Profligate and Atheiſtical "Minds. And yet they have the Face to tell us, that *Communion with*, and *Separation from*, an Eſtabliſh'd Church (both Church and Perſons continuing ſtill the ſame) may very well conſiſt with a *Good Conſcience*; which all Divines abroad look on as a Perfect Contradiction. But I ſhall take my Leave of *State-Diſſenters*, whoſe *Carnal Politicks* render 'em impenetrable to the keeneſt Arguments, and return to *Thee*, if thou art a *Well-meaning* One, and willing to be Inform'd; and beſeech thee, in the firſt place, to ſhake off the *Prepoſſeſſions* and *Prejudices* of Education, and the *Tyranny* of thy Secular Leaders, whoſe Conduct thou haſt ſo long and ſo *blindly* followed, and ſeriouſly to conſider the following Particulars. I. The

I. The *Nature* of *Religion*: Which does not consist in Fruitless Speculations, or *Party Opinions*, in Fanciful Amusements, or Giddy Novelties, in Enthusiastick Heats, or Fulsome Phrases, in Extempore Effusions, or Long and Noisy Addresses, in the Jingling of Words, or a Melting Tone, in Wry Mouths, or Ejaculated Eyes, in Ceremonial Observances, or a Superstitious Abstinence; not in Forms or Fancies, Gestures or Habits, in *Meat* or *Drink*; no, but in *Righteousness*, *Peace*, *and Joy in the Holy Ghost*; in an Orthodox Belief, and a Regular Conversation; in the Continual Exercise of a *Conscience void of Offence towards God and Man*: A Conscience that is neither abus'd by False Principles, nor over-power'd by Vile Affections; that is neither misled by *Prejudice*, *Passion*, or *Interest*: A Conscience, that neither renders us Secure and Confident in the *Wrong*, nor Upbraids us with any Hypocritical Prevarication, or Wilful Violation of the *Right*. And, in a Word, Religion consists in a sincere and diligent Pursuit of *Peace* and *Holiness*; *without which*, we are told, *No Man shall see the Lord*. Did but Men form a True Idea of God and Religion, they wou'd not violate the most Important and Essential Duties of it, for Things of an Indifferent and Inferiour Nature. Whereas, Christian, thy Scruples and Practices plainly discover, that thou entertainest such mean and dishonourable Thoughts of the DEITY, as if he had a greater Regard to the *Dress* and *Circumstances* of Religion, than to the *Nature* of the *Duty*, and the *Disposition* of the *Mind* that performs it. As if He were so Humorsome a Being, as to reject the Prayers of a Devout Supplicant, because they are *printed* and *read*; or because He dislikes the Garment the Minister wears: Like a certain Hypocondraick Parent, whom I knew, that disinherited an ingenious and dutiful Child, because

he did not like the Colour of his Hair. We acknowledge our Ceremonies to be things indifferent, and uſe 'em only out of Obedience to our Superiours, for outward Order and Decency: But the *ſcrupulous Diſſenters* lay ſuch a mighty Streſs on them, as conſcientiouſly to abſtain from 'em as unlawful; and are afraid to ſwallow 'em, leaſt the Devil and all his Works ſhould crowd in after them. And if this be not *Superſtition*, what is there that does deſerve the Name of it?

II. Reflect often on the *Unity* of the Church, and the *Obligations* that all *Baptiz'd Perſons* lie under, inviolably to preſerve it. Conſider ſeriouſly the Prayer of thy Dying Redeemer, *Joh.* 17. 21. *That they all may be one, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee; that they alſo may be one in us, that the World may believe that thou haſt ſent me.* Which was to be a *Viſible* Unity, that it might become an engaging Motive to Men to entertain the Chriſtian Religion. But if his Prayer can't move thee, reflect on the Agonies of his Death; who ſhed the laſt Drop of his precious Blood, to cement and unite all the parts of this *Heavenly Building*. His Divine Soul took its leave of Fleſh and Blood, *to gather together into one, the Children of God that were ſcatter'd abroad*, *John* 11. 52. And wilt thou do all that in thee lies, to defeat the *Efficacy* of his Prayer, and the *End* of his Death? How earneſtly does St. *Paul* exhort the *Epheſians* * to *keep the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace?* Which Duty he enforces, by all the Arguments ſo great an Apoſtle could poſſibly ſuggeſt and heap together. *There is one Body, and one Spirit, even as you are called in one Hope of your Calling: One Lord, one Faith, and one Baptiſm; one God and Father of all; who is above all, and thro' all, and in you all.* In which Words he plainly inſinuates, That he that does not endeavour to *keep the*

* *Epheſ.* 4. 3, 4, 5, 6.

Unity

Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace; does act repugnantly to the Nature of Christianity; and cuts himself off from that glorious and necessary Unity which he here so fully explains. Art thou Baptized, and so made a visible Member of the Universal Church; and art thou not indispensably oblig'd to do the proper Office of a Member, and to contribute all thou can'st to the *Unity* and *Strength* of the Whole Body? *If it be possible*, says the Apostle, *as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all Men*, Rom. 12. 18. And consequently with Societies of Men: And shall Peace be violated in the Church (the Best of Societies), where it ought to be preserv'd most entire and inviolate; and that, by Those that acknowledge it to be *Possible* and *Lawful*.

II. Consider the *Heinous Nature* and *Dreadful Consequences* of **Schism**; which is little consider'd by many, whom the Devil has inspir'd with that *Giddy Principle*, That 'tis left to every Man's Choice to Joyn with what Society of Christians he pleases: Which necessarily involves us in an absolute Confusion, and gives Birth to the Worst Errors and Evils, that a Church or State can be infested withal. Whereas in the Opinion of the *Ancient Non-Conformists*, it was to be avoided and detested as *Adultery* or *Murther*. And indeed so it ought, if we consider, That 'tis no other than a *Crucifying the Son of God afresh*; by Mangling and Dividing a *Sound* and *Healthy* Part of that Body, whereof He has Graciously condescended to be the HEAD; cutting its Sinews, tearing its Bowels, and diffolving that Spirit of Love and Peace which shou'd diffuse it self through it. Ah! How can'st Thou, without a Trembling Horrour, think on a **Sin** so *Abominable* in its *Nature*, and as *Fatal* in its *Consequences*; so Dishonourable to thy Saviour and his Religion; so Destructive to Church and State, and the

uls of Men? Good God! How can any, that ave a *Spark* of *Zeal* for Thine *Honour*, ſee thoſe *Blots* and *Reproaches*, wherewith their *Manifold Diviſions* have *ſtain'd* the Beauty and Luſtre of Chriſtianity, without that tender Sympathy which becomes the Breaſt of every Diſciple of the Bleſſed Jeſus? How can the *Diſſenters* look on thoſe *Ghaſtly Wounds*, which their *Separation* has given the Church of Chriſt, and their dear Native Country, without a Relenting Heart? How can they ſee the *Beſt Conſtitution* in the World (which ſecures every thing that's *dear* to 'em) thus torn and ſhatter'd, without that Regret and Melancholy, which becomes every *ſenſible Member* of the Community? How can *Proteſtants* reflect on the many Advantages they've given the *Papiſts*, to Re-eſtabliſh their Idolatrous Worſhip in this Kingdom, without the ſmart and cutting Repartees of Conſcience? Who ſtand ready to enter at thoſe Breaches, which they are making, and to erect their Church on the Ruins of this: Hoping by theſe *Diviſions*, to repair the Loſſes they've ſuſtain'd by the *Reformation*. And indeed, the *Diſſenters* have as *induſtriouſly* carried on the Deſigns of the Church of *Rome*, as if they were *commiſſion'd* by the *Triple Crown*, and were *inſpir'd* by the *Conclave*. I ſhall conclude this Particular with a Suppoſition, That there might be a more Agreeable Conſtitution than the preſent is, invented; which *None* can tell, 'till it comes to be try'd; That there are ſome Things to be amended in our *Liturgy*, which Men of the greateſt Penetration cannot yet diſcover; Yet ſurely, To tear a Church in pieces, To contemn the Publick Worſhip of God, To violate the Bond of Peace, and Brotherly Communion, To crumble into *Sects* and Parties, To live in perpetual Strife and Contention with One Another, To diſobey Lawful Governours, diſturb the Peace of the Kingdom, and to

expose our selves to a Common Enemy, is a far more *Intollerable Evil* than any that can possibly be conceiv'd in our *Constitution*, or *Form* of *Worship*.

IV. Consider the *Obligations* Thou lieſt under, to yield *ready Obedience* to the Commands of *Lawful Governours*, that are not *Inconsistent* with the Laws of GOD: These being the Vicegerents of the Universal Monarch of Heaven and Earth; who has been pleas'd to impart a Ray of his Authority to Man; and whose Image consists in *Dominion*, as well as *Knowledge* and *Righteousness*. There is no Duty of a Christian more expressly and frequently commanded, or more forcibly inculcated, than This of *Obedience to the Higher Powers*; wherein the Life of our Saviour, as well as of his Apostles, was so Eminent and Exemplary. And indeed, Nothing is more Repugnant to the Genius and Design of Christianity, than the *Spirit* of *Contention*. *Disobedience* as well as *Schism*, is as direct a Contradiction to the *Peaceableness*, as *Luxury* and *Epicurism* is to the *Purity of that Wisdom which is from Above*. Nay, 'tis a *Vice* of a bigger Size, and deeper Tincture: For Sensuality constitutes us *Beasts*, but Disobedience *Devils*. He that does but read, without Passion and Prejudice, the Seven first Verses of the 13th Chapter of St. *Paul*'s Epistle to the *Romans*, cannot, without equal Violence to the Words and his own Conscience, but meekly acquiesce in the Doctrine of NON-RESISTANCE and PASSIVE OBEDIENCE, as truly *Apostolical* and *Divine*.

V. Consider lastly, the *Boundless Charity* of the Church of *England*; which by the *Indulgence* it has given to *Scrupulous Consciences*, shews, That 'tis of a Temper as Remote from the *Spirit* of *Persecution*, as of *Disloyalty*; whereof *They* themselves that most accuse her are the most *Pregnant Proof*: The Number and Riches of the *Dissenters*, to which I must take

leave

Souls of Men? Good God! How can any, that have a *Spark* of *Zeal* for Thine *Honour*, ſee thoſe *Blots* and *Reproaches*, wherewith their *Manifold Diviſions* have *ſtain'd* the Beauty and Luſtre of Chriſtianity, without that tender Sympathy which becomes the Breaſt of every Diſciple of the Bleſſed Jeſus? How can the *Diſſenters* look on thoſe *Ghaſtly Wounds*, which their *Separation* has given the Church of Chriſt, and their dear Native Country, without a Relenting Heart? How can they ſee the *Beſt Conſtitution* in the World (which ſecures every thing that's *dear* to 'em) thus torn and ſhatter'd, without that Regret and Melancholy, which becomes every *ſenſible Member* of the Community? How can *Proteſtants* reflect on the many Advantages they've given the *Papiſts*, to Re-eſtabliſh their Idolatrous Worſhip in this Kingdom, without the ſmart and cutting Repartees of Conſcience? Who ſtand ready to enter at thoſe Breaches, which they are making, and to erect their Church on the Ruins of this: Hoping by theſe *Diviſions*, to repair the Loſſes they've ſuſtain'd by the *Reformation*. And indeed, the *Diſſenters* have as *induſtriouſly* carried on the Deſigns of the Church of *Rome*, as if they were *commiſſion'd* by the *Triple Crown*, and were *inſpir'd* by the *Conclave*. I ſhall conclude this Particular with a Suppoſition, That there might be a more Agreeable Conſtitution than the preſent is, invented; which *None* can tell, 'till it comes to be try'd; That there are ſome Things to be amended in our *Liturgy*, which Men of the greateſt Penetration cannot yet diſcover; Yet ſurely, To tear a Church in pieces, To contemn the Publick Worſhip of God, To violate the Bond of Peace, and Brotherly Communion, To crumble into *Sects* and Parties, To live in perpetual Strife and Contention with One Another, To diſobey Lawful Governours, diſturb the Peace of the Kingdom, and to

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expose our selves to a Common Enemy, is a far more *Intollerable Evil* than any that can possibly be conceiv'd in our *Constitution*, or *Form* of *Worship*.

IV. Consider the *Obligations* Thou lieſt under, to yield *ready Obedience* to the Commands of *Lawful Governours*, that are not *Inconsistent* with the Laws of GOD: These being the Vicegerents of the Universal Monarch of Heaven and Earth; who has been pleas'd to impart a Ray of his Authority to Man; and whose Image consists in *Dominion*, as well as *Knowledge* and *Righteousness*. There is no Duty of a Christian more expressly and frequently commanded, or more forcibly inculcated, than This of *Obedience to the Higher Powers*; wherein the Life of our Saviour, as well as of his Apostles, was so Eminent and Exemplary. And indeed, Nothing is more Repugnant to the Genius and Design of Christianity, than the *Spirit* of *Contention*. *Disobedience* as well as *Schism*, is as direct a Contradiction to the *Peaceableness*, as *Luxury* and *Epicurism* is to the *Purity of that Wisdom which is from Above*. Nay, 'tis a *Vice* of a bigger Size, and deeper Tincture: For Sensuality constitutes us *Beasts*, but Disobedience *Devils*. He that does but read, without Passion and Prejudice, the Seven first Verses of the 13th Chapter of St. *Paul*'s Epistle to the *Romans*, cannot, without equal Violence to the Words and his own Conscience, but meekly acquiesce in the Doctrine of NON-RESISTANCE and PASSIVE OBEDIENCE, as truly *Apostolical* and *Divine*.

V. Consider lastly, the *Boundless Charity* of the Church of *England*; which by the *Indulgence* it has given to *Scrupulous Consciences*, shews, That 'tis of a Temper as Remote from the *Spirit* of *Persecution*, as of *Disloyalty*; whereof *They* themselves that most accuse her are the most *Pregnant Proof*: The Number and Riches of the *Dissenters*, to which I must take

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leave to add their *Confidence*, being the moſt Undeniable Argument of the *Unparalell'd Indulgence* of that CHURCH, under whoſe Government they have grown up to this Prodigious Heigth. Whereas the *Diſſenters* (who formerly declar'd a *Toleration to be an appointing a City of Refuge in Mens Conſciences for the Devil to fly to, and a Toleration of Soul-Murther, the greateſt of all others*) are of a quite different Principle and Kidney; whereof *Scotland* and *New-England* are a ſufficient Evidence: And, Ah! I wiſh I cou'd not ſay, *Old England* too, to the Eternal Reproach of our Nation, and the Reform'd Religion in it. Now I cannot but perſwade my ſelf, That a ſerious and frequent Reflection on theſe Things, wou'd baniſh the very Names of *Superſtition* and *Schiſm*, *Faction* and *Rebellion*; and revive the Spirit, Unity and Obedience of the Primitive Church, and make us a happy and flouriſhing People. I ſhall Conclude with that Pathetick Exhortation of the Apoſtle, big with all the Engaging Charms, and Mutual Endearments, that the Religion of the Bleſſed Jeſus can afford: *If there be therefore any Conſolation in Chriſt, if any Comfort of Love, if any Fellowſhip of the Spirit, if any Bowels and Mercies; fulfill ye my Joy, that ye be like minded, having the ſame Love, being of One Accord, of One Mind*, Phil. 2. 1, 2.

F I N I S.